CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

DECEMBER 1978

Castlemaine Wax-flower

President: Mrs R. Mills.
Treasurer: Mr L. Bransgrove.
Min. Sec:: Mrs B. Singleton.
Gen. Sec : Mr M. Winterbottom.
Newsletter: Mr E. Perkins.

Monthly meetings are held on the second Friday of each month except January, at 8 p.m. in the Castlemaine Education Centre (SEC building, Mostyn St). Visitors and prospective members are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

Orchids of the Castlemaine District No 18 of a series by R. M...

MIDGET GREENHOOD

Pterostylis mutica

These dainty, pale coloured orchids, with their almost transparent pale green hood, finely striped with darker green, are quite uncommon but widespread. They usually occur singly and are difficult to find.

One specimen was found at North Castlemaine and another two at Muckleford this season.

According to Galbraith they can range from short and stout to tall and slender, with few or many flowers, but the specimens that I saw were about 8 cm. tall on a stem bearing several flowers and rising from a central rosette which was beginning to wither at flowering.

The dark green or maroon tongue is very sensitive and will flick up into the hood when touched, trapping the pollinating insects which have to crawl out over the column. This is shown as a shadow near the tip of the hood, or galea.

BIRD OBSERVER'S CLUB

THE BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB

The Bird Observers' Club, started in 1905, is one of Victoria's oldest conservation clubs. and also one of the largest.

One of its first conservation efforts was in 1908, when a series of photographs was made to show the slaughter of breeding Egrets in order to obtain feathers for hats. The resulting public outcry, both here and overseas, led to the Plumage Prohibition Bill. In the following year the Bird Observers' Club worked with each of the States, leading to the establishment of the Gould League.

The Club disbanded during World War 1, and reformed in 1927. Many of the conservation issues of the '30 's are still issues today. These included the granting of grazing licences in national parks, foxes in Sherbrooke Forest, the removal of tree-ferns, the use of drum nets in streams and the protection of wattles. As a result of the 1939 bush fires, efforts from a number of members led to the establishment of "Save the Forests" campaign. The words of C.J. Dennis in an article "Bird Observers versus Bush Fires" still applies today.

> "What can I do for the Birds? Team work is essential, and a team has leaders, players and barrackers, especially the latter.....
>
> Full of tearful fearful folk who scorn the verb 'to do'
> Who recognise their principle, butfail to see it through,
> 'Tis performance that is needed in the land;
> Merely talking never shifted any sand."

In 1949 the first Bird Observer booklet, "Guide to the Hawks" was published. Later a field guide to the waders was published, followed by books on the honeyeaters, warblers and flycatchers.

In 1958, the work of BOC members led to the banning of the use of live birds in trap shooting. In the same year tree planting in the You-Yangs began - an activity that is still in progress.

In 1960, as a result of action by BOC members, Commonwealth legislation banned the export of live birds and animals.

More recent conservation moves by the BOC have included bird collecting expeditions, abuse of pesticides, additions to National Parks, and so non. BOC members initiated the protest over the Little Desert Scheme, a protest that led to the establisment of the Land Conservation Council.

Membership of the Bird Observers Club (at the end of 1977) was

2233 from Victoria, 307 from other States and 34 from overseas. This large membership is not surprising as members get very good value for their subscription. Apart from the support of this important conservation group, members get an excellent monthly newsletter. In addition there is a program of meetings and excursions, sales of books etc. The club also operates a shop situated at 183 Springvale Rd, Nunawading.

Membership is from January to December; those joining after October get membership until the December of the following year. Country membership is $5.

Book Review

FLORA OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA Part 1, Black, revised by J.P. Jessop. Third Edition, S.A. Government Printer. Price- about $17

The most recent Victorian Flora was by Professor Ewart, published about 45 years ago. It is now very much out of date and very hard to get - about 15 years ago copies were selling at about £100. As a result, a new edition of the Flora of a neighbouring State is of particular interest.

Black's Flora has been a most useful book for Victorians, but, even using the 1965 supplement, was out of date.

Perhaps the most serious fault with the original editions was the Key to the Families; it is almost impossible to use successfully. In the new edition the key to the families has been completely revised; it is an excellent example of such a key. There are also more illustrations and all of the South Australian Orchids are illustrated. The book is worth the money for either of these.

Verdict: Recommended highly if you do not mind technical words. I hope that volumes 2,3 and 4 follow shortly.

E.P.

THE IDEAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT

GIVE 12 MONTH'S GIFT MEMBERSHIP - BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB

Gift subscriptions include 12 month's membership and delivery of "The Bird Observer " each month, plus a personal introduction through a gift subscription card featuring Neil Douglas's delightful illustration "Choughs"

Country membership - $5 Student/Junior - $3

Subscriptions to: Bird Observers' Club,
P.O. Box 185,
Nunawading 3131.

NORTH CENTRAL STUDY AREA

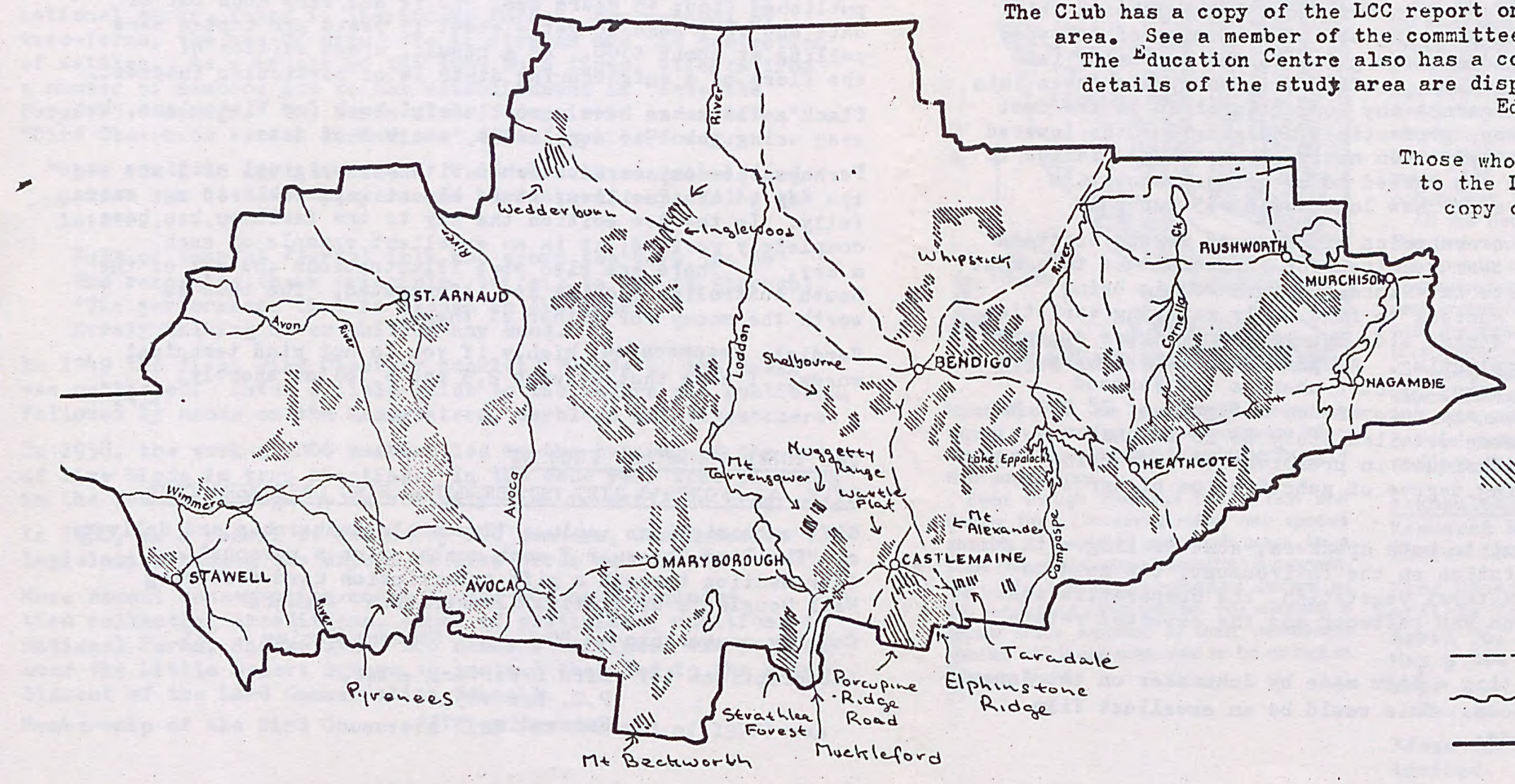
SCALE - 1:1000,000

A simplified map of the North Central area is shown below.

The Land Conservation Council has invited all who are interested to make comment on the future use of the public land by making written submissions.

All such submissions must reach the secretary of the L.C.C. no later than Friday 22nd December. The address is

Secretary,
Land Conservation Council,
464 St Kilda Road,
Melbourne Vic 3004.



All members of the club are urged to accept the invitation to make a submission. Hints about making a submission were printed on page 7 of Castlemaine Naturalist Number 29 (Oct 78) We will not have cause for complaint if we neglect this opportunity and as a result, our local bush is lost to us and our descendants.

There will be a special meeting of the Club (at the Education Centre) on Wednesday December 13th to consider our final submission. All interested Club members are invited to attend. If you have information or ideas about any of the areas of public land in the study area this would be welcomed.

The Kalimna Park area is inside the Castlemaine City Council's boundary and so is excuded from the study area.

The Club has a copy of the LCC report on the North Central area. See a member of the committee to obtain this. The Education Centre also has a copy, and maps showing details of the study area are displayed in the Education Centre.

Those who make recommendations to the L.C.C. will receive a copy of their recommendations.

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SAVE OUR BUSHLAND SEMINAR A report by Frank Meyer.

A Seminar organised by the "Save Our Bushland Action Group" was held at Daylesford on 12th November.

It was attended by Stan Bruton and Frank Meyer. Speakers were Dr P. Gregg (Forests Commission of Victoria) and Jim Douglas ((Australian Bureau of Agricultural Economics). A brief visit was made to an area planted by pines by the Forest Commission in 1976.

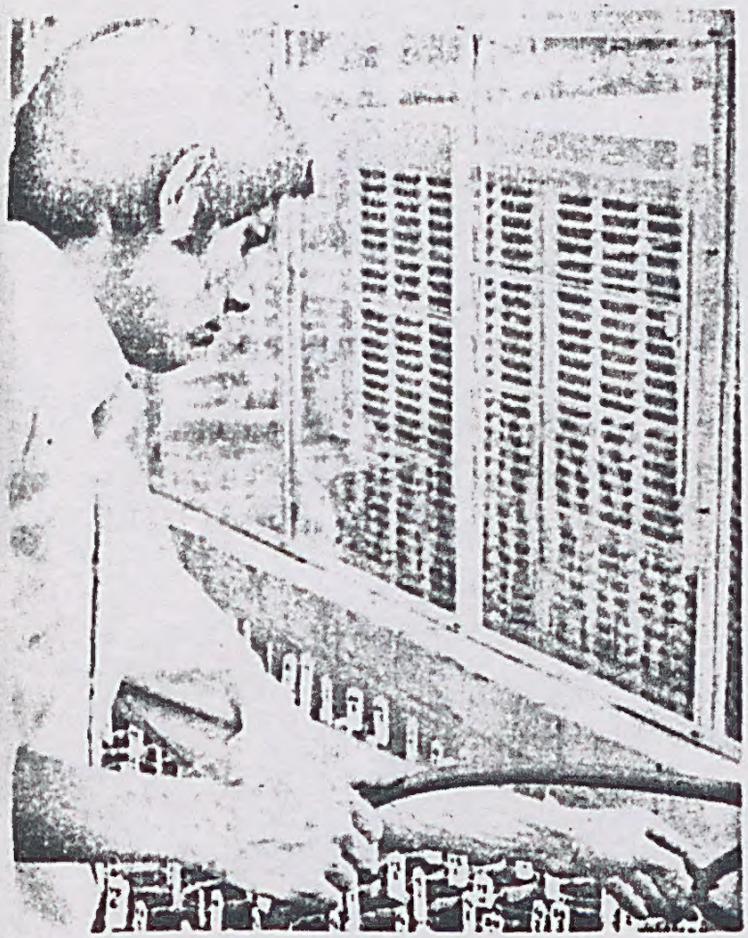
Dr Gregg said that 40% of our timber is imported from overseas or interstate. Half of our timber consumption is in softwood and about 2/3 of this goes into structural work and the remainder into paper pulp. The Victorian Forest Commission hold 72 000 ha. in pines and about the same area is in private land. Only about 2% of the area is in farm wood lots although this is on the increase. In speaking of the economics of softwood productionDr Gregg saidthat the gains to the community in rural employment, recreation, profit to industry are taken into careful consideration against the losses involved in the cost of planting, cultivating, protecting, managing and the lowered quality of our water supply when native forests are planted in pine. Royalties which are agreed to by cabinet amount to $17-$18 per cubic metre for saw logs and $1-$5 for pulp

Mr Douglas spoke of the economics of Hardwood versus Softwood production. The long term required for hardwood make this most unattractive for private investors but research is being carried out with some success to find early maturing varieties of eucalypts. On the demand side for softwoods there appears to have been some overplanting. At present 34 000 ha per annum in Australia is being planted whereas the Forwood Conference of two years ago recommended a figure of 28 000 ha but now altered by a more detailed study to 20 000 ha. Mr Douglas said new techniques in preservation and drying had resulted in a decreasing degree of substitution of hardwood with softwood.

Many questions were put to both speakers; some dealing with the effect of a pine plantation on the environment, the need to provide corridors of natural vegetation, the comparative cost of planting in hardwood and softwood and the expected return from each.species.

At the end of the meeting a film made by Schumaker on the Jarrah forest of W.A. was shown. This would be an excellent film for one of our meetings.

Research helps to save our unique flora



Plant species are continually becoming extinct in Australia, due to inadequate information on their distribution and monitoring of their populations.

Even though Australia has a rich and unique flora containing many rare species growing in restricted and small areas, large scale clearing of native vegetation is proceeding unchecked, with consequent dangers to the survival of plant species. For instance, a recent study reported at least twenty-one species which are presumed to be extinct in Victoria alone.

It is therefore a matter of great urgency that a program be initiated to establish which species are most seriously endangered and to determine the most efficient ways of monitoring these endangered populations.

Dr R.F. Parsons, above, of the University's School of Botany recently received a substantial grant from the Ian Potter Foundation to start a complete, up-to-date register of rare and endangered indigenous plants in Victoria. Dr Parsons received this grant following his earlier work on the distribution of Victorian plants.

Another member of La Trobe University's Botany Department, Mr G.W. Carr, will also be working on this project, together with reliable field observers throughout the State.

The size and reproductive performance of the most significant populations will be estimated. Records will also be kept of the land ownership, the presence of weeds and draining, clearing and other operations which could threaten the plants' survival. Recommendations will then be given on the required conservation measures. Arrangements will be made for regular monitoring of the populations.

All this field data will be entered on the standard report form for each species, building up into a detailed register of rare and endangered species. Individual reports will be sent immediately to any agency concerned with the management of the land on which such species are growing.

These observations will have obvious application throughout southern Australia. They will also contribute important data for international programs designed to study such problems on a world-wide scale.

Acknowledgements

Research Helps to save our unique flora- Latrobe University RECORD.

Bird Observers Club-from an article in"The Bird Observer", April 76.

Map p 3&4 - Adapted from a BOC map.

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Ideas for 1979 program are invited.

MEETINGS

Friday Dec 8th Dr Moulds.
Dr Moulds has recently retired from his position as Chairman of the Forests Commission. Forests and Victorian Plant associations'

January In recess.

Friday Feb 9th Mr Ray Wallace.
Subject- Birds of Prey.
This is the annual meeting.

Excursions

Saturday Dec 9th Drummond North
Leave the Education Centre at 1.30 p.m. This will be the final excursion for the year.

Excursions for next Year

Pond Life.
A bushwalk in the Vaughan Area (this will be the walk that was to have been held on Nov 19)

The Annual Meeting All members of the committe retire and are eligible for re-election. The committee mebers are

Pres: Mrs R. Mills, Vice Pres: Mr G. Sitch.
Minute Sec: Mrs B. Singleton, General Sec: Mr M. Winterbottom.
Treasurer: Mr L. Bransgrove.
Committee: Mr F. Blake(librarian), Mr C. Singleton, Miss K Singleton, Miss J. Chapman (Reports recorder), Mrs R. Winterbottom (supper roster), Mrs A. Joyce, Mr F. Meyer, Mr R. Bradfield (I/P President) and Mr E. Perkins (Newsletter)

Mrs Mills is also Publicity Officer and Mr Winterbottom is - records officer.

Next Committee Meeting The next committe meeting will be at the Education Centre on Thursday January 25th at 8 p.m.

Special Club Meeting - Land Conservation Council Submission

There will be a special club meeting on Wed 13th December to prepare this club's submission to the L.C.C for the North Central region. All club members are invited.

Situations Vacant

EDITOR OF "CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST"

Pay: nil.

This is an interesting and rewarding position. The successful appointee can be assured of widespread support from Club members in the form of articles etc.

Ability to type is an advantage.